

FUNDING THE FUTURE

How Kentucky Can Fund the Expansion of DNA Databasing

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The expansion of any government program inevitably comes with a hefty price tag. Expanding Kentucky's DNA database is no exception. But, the weight of such an evolution does not have to fall solely on the shoulders of the general fund.

In today's economy, expecting state governments to foot the bill alone often can be prohibitive for any new measure. Researchers and experts have invested considerable time into creative ideas to fund the expansion of databases to include either arrestees or familial searching in the states and countries already using this technology.

First, though, it is important to get a feel for the potential cost to the commonwealth if arrestee databasing were to be pursued.

THE COST

Last year, Kentucky State Police Central Forensic Laboratory DNA Database Supervisor Stacy Warnecke prepared estimates for expanding the current database to include arrestees. Below are some of the figures provided by Warnecke and the KSP Crime in Kentucky report that help to create a picture of what is involved with expanding the DNA database's included profiles:

- Up to 20,000 new convicted offender DNA samples now are being processed by the KSP lab annually.

- Because of a backlog created after the law changed to include all convicted felons, the central lab processes a total of roughly 30,000 samples each year.
- KSP reported a total of 351,976 arrests statewide in 2010. The data does not indicate how many of those arrests resulted in convictions which already lead to DNA collection.
- Under the KSP report's serious crime category — which includes a variety of crimes ranging from murder to arson — 35,269 arrests were reported statewide in 2010.

Based on the number of arrests reported in 2010, figures were compiled to estimate how much it would cost the state to process DNA samples for 360,000 samples. However, it should be noted that this is a conservative estimate. Because of the way the crimes are reported, the number of arrests more fairly represents the number of crimes offenders were charged with. Since criminals commonly are charged with more than one crime in a single arrest, or are arrested multiple times during the year, the number of actual arrestees inevitably would be lower.

Additionally, because the state already is collecting DNA from up to 20,000 convicted felons, there is some duplication